Keeping Lake Beautiful with a simple to use Mobile Application

Case Study

Highlights

- Easy to use mobile app identifies areas of litter
- Monitoring of reports facilitates community action

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Return on Investment

- $0.00 spent with in-house development
- Citizens voices are heard
- Lake County becomes a nicer place to live

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For more information, contact:
Sue Carroll, GIS Manager
(scarroll@lakecountyfl.gov)

Brandon Barnett
GIS Administrator
(bbarnett@lakecountyfl.gov)

Lake County's Geographic Information Services (GIS) Division has worked with *Keep Lake Beautiful,* an affiliation of Keep *America Beautiful*, to create the **Litter Reporter** within the county's Crowdsource Reporter website. This simple mobile application allows citizens to submit problems and observations around Lake County, and the **Litter Reporter** is the first entry.
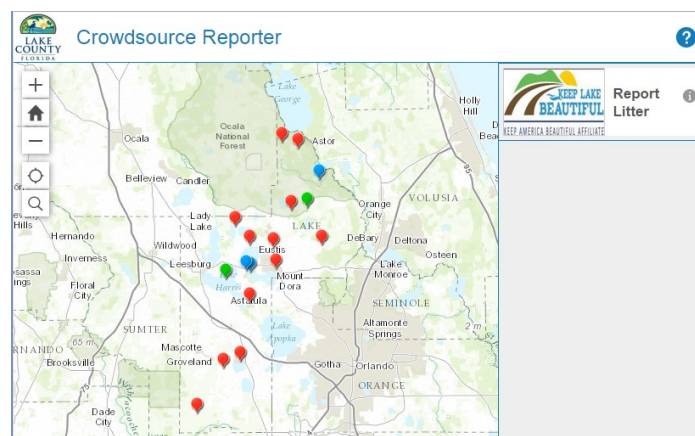
Background

Within the Lake County Board of County Commissioners' vision statement is the commitment to offer "an unsurpassed quality of life for its citizens". With that in mind, the county has become a local affiliate of *Keep America Beautiful*—"the nations leading nonprofit that builds and sustains vibrant communities". *Keep Lake Beautiful* is a volunteer organization whose mission is "to beautify Lake County by engaging our community".

The Issue

Being a volunteer organization presents challenges in organizing and coordinating projects, objectives, and citizen involvement. What areas of the county are of most concern for litter and other unsightliness? How can this information be collected, prioritized and utilized to facilitate local efforts to manage it?
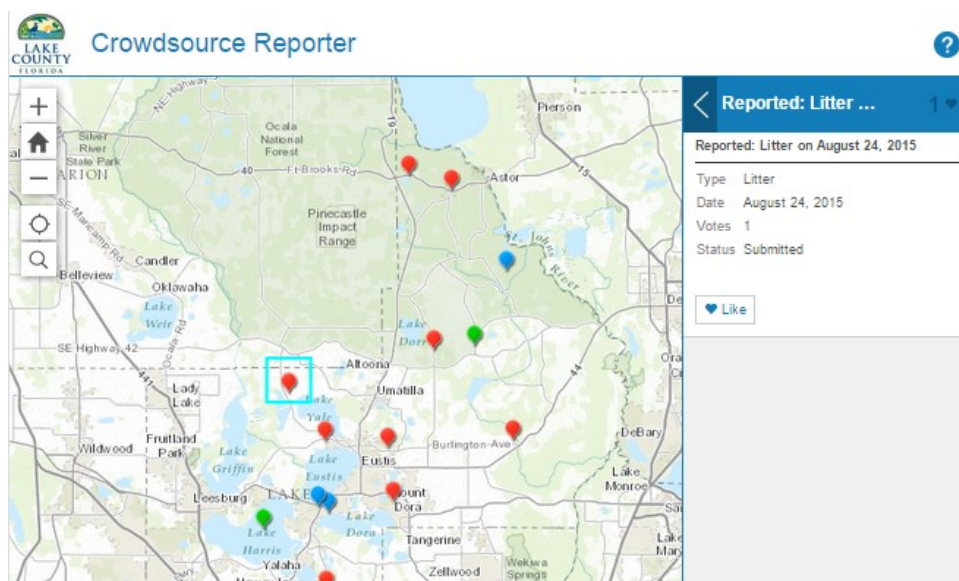
The Solution

The Executive Director of *Keep Lake Beautiful* approached the county's GIS Division with these challenges and asked if there were a way to allow citizens to report areas of litter, and to map them for easy monitoring. The solution was the **Crowdsource Reporter**. This web-based application, viewable on smartphones, tablets, and desktop computers, allows citizens to not only submit data about an area of concern, but actually map it themselves and attach photos to illustrate the problem.

Within the **Crowdsource Reporter** specific reporting forms are presented; the first being the **Litter Reporter** (additional Reporters are expected in the future). Citizens can access the app through a web browser using a link on the *Keep Lake Beautiful* web page and clicking on the **Report Litter** tab. Then they simply fill out the short form, identify the area on the map

and click **Report It**. If a site has already been identified, other citizens can "like" it and raise it's priority. *Keep Lake Beautiful* will monitor submissions and propose clean-up efforts and community events as needed. The more map markers received in a local area, or the more "like" votes given for a particular site, the higher the priority will be for community action. As sites are cleaned up, they are removed from the map so citizens only see current areas of concerns.

The Benefits

Giving reporting capabilities directly to the citizens of Lake County allows their voices to be heard. The neighborhoods they feel need the most attention become the focus of *Keep Lake Beautiful* and allow that organization to meet actual needs .

Hosting the application and data on the county's server and maintaining it using county staff saves money and allows staff to better manage the data. Specific information can be extracted for reporting to the Executive Committee, for audit purposes, and for overall productivity monitoring. It has also allowed for certain customizations in the app's look and functionality. It was decided not to display to the public the submitters name and contact information, the description field or the photos—something the basic template originally presented—to avoid misuse and potential embarrassment.

And there are financial benefits as well because the entire **Crowdsource Reporter** app and the **Litter Reporter** form were created using a free Esri® app template and customized entirely in-house using existing staff, technology and resources. Other than staff time (which was minimal) there were no additional expenses incurred by *Keep Lake Beautiful* or Lake County.